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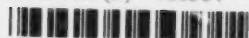
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Continuing reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications**Report of the Secretary-General***Summary*

The present report, prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 58/101 B of 9 December 2003, details the steps taken between March 2003 and February 2004 towards the continuing reorientation of the Department of Public Information. As a result of the implementation of the 2002 reform proposals of the Secretary-General (see A/57/387 and Corr.1), the Department now has a new mission statement, a new organizational structure and a new operating model. A new client-oriented focus, greater system-wide coordination and a culture of evaluation lie at the heart of the new strategic direction it has taken.

The Department has introduced the concept of the Secretariat departments as "clients", which identify their own priorities, and the Department of Public Information as "service provider", working along clear guidelines given by its clients. Formal arrangements have been established with 24 clients. The Department has also redoubled its efforts to bring the members of the United Nations system, including the network of United Nations information centres, within a common communications framework. The third element, a culture of evaluation, is now an integral part of the work of the Department. As an initial step in the three-year project between the Department and the Office of Internal Oversight Services, the first annual programme impact review was completed in January 2004. This reorientation report, which incorporates the initial set of data collected as part of the review process, presents the preliminary efforts by each of the Department's divisions to assess results.

The report concludes that, as a result of its continuing process of reorientation, the Department has been able to enhance public information and bring the United Nations "closer to the people". The Department will continue to evaluate its performance and adapt its work programme to fulfil the substantive purposes of the Organization.



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I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 12 of its resolution 58/101 B of 9 December 2003, the General Assembly welcomed the steps taken towards restructuring the Department of Public Information and encouraged the Secretary-General to continue the reorientation exercise and efforts to improve the efficiency and productivity of the Department, including wide-ranging and innovative proposals, and to report thereon to the Committee on Information at its twenty-sixth session.

2. In paragraph 14 of resolution 58/101 B, the General Assembly welcomed the Department's decision to implement an annual programme impact review, making self-evaluation a part of the daily work of all programme managers with a view to institutionalizing performance management. In paragraph 34 of the same resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-sixth session on the progress made. With the assistance of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, the Department has completed the first annual programme impact review. At a meeting of the Bureau of the Committee on Information held on 20 January 2004, the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information informed the members that the findings of the review would be reflected throughout the reorientation report of the Department and submitted to the Committee on Information at its twenty-sixth session. Accordingly, this reorientation report, which incorporates the first set of data collected as part of the review process, presents the initial efforts to assess results.

3. It should be noted that, in several other paragraphs of resolution 58/101 B, the General Assembly called upon the Department to provide specific information on a number of its activities to the Committee on Information. They include:

- The activities of the United Nations Communications Group (para. 22)
- A progress report on the rationalization of the network of United Nations information centres (para. 40)
- The progress made on consolidation of the United Nations field presence in a single United Nations house (para. 43)
- The role of the Department of Public Information in United Nations peacekeeping (para. 52)
- Measures taken to ensure accessibility to the United Nations web site by persons with disabilities, including visual and hearing disabilities (para. 62)
- The most practical, efficient and cost-effective means of implementing the Secretary-General's proposal on the continued development, maintenance and enrichment of the United Nations web site in the six official languages (para. 66) and the designation of a date by which all supporting arrangements would be in place for the implementation of the Secretary-General's concept (para. 67)
- The proposal of the Secretary-General to provide free, public access to the Official Document System of the United Nations through a link with the Organization's web site (para. 71)
- The work of the Steering Committee on the Modernization and Integrated Management of United Nations Libraries (para. 78).

4. Through consultations with the Bureau of the Committee on Information, it was decided that the information requested in resolution 58/101 B, as well as in resolutions 58/126 of 19 December 2003 and 58/270 of 23 December 2003, would be grouped into six reports, the most comprehensive of which would be the one dealing with the continuing reorientation of the Department of Public Information. The remaining reports, listed in the provisional agenda and annotations/programme of work (A/AC.198/2004/1) address requests for information on more specific areas.

II. Reforming the Department of Public Information: defining a new focus

5. With the implementation of the September 2002 reform proposals of the Secretary-General, reflected in the report entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387 and Corr.1), a broad-based restructuring of the Department of Public Information has been completed. The Department now has a new mission statement, a new operating model and a new organizational structure, the details of which were provided in the report of the Secretary-General on the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications (A/AC.198/2003/2). In continuing the reorientation process, the focus of the Department of Public Information has been defined by its new mission statement which reads:

"The Department of Public Information's mission is to help fulfil the substantive purposes of the United Nations by strategically communicating the activities and concerns of the Organization to achieve the greatest public impact."

At the heart of this new strategic approach lie three points of reference: a new client-oriented approach; greater system-wide coordination; and embedding a culture of evaluation into the work of the Department.

A. Client consultations

6. A new element in the operating model of the Department of Public Information is the introduction of the concept of the Secretariat departments as "clients", which identify their own priorities, and the Department of Public Information as "service provider", working along clear guidelines provided by the departments. The client consultation process is led by the newly created Strategic Communications Division, which is tasked with identifying the substantive activities and concerns of the Organization and preparing global strategies to promote them.

7. Great strides have been made in bringing the client planning process from a concept to a reality. Since November 2002, when the "client-oriented" focus was introduced, the Department has identified 24 clients and established formal working arrangements with them. During the past year, more than 30 strategies were prepared, either in writing or verbally agreed upon with the client departments. Eighteen written reports on the effectiveness of these communications strategies have been sent to the client departments and their feedback has been sought.

8. To facilitate the client planning process, each client department was assigned to one of the four sections within the Communications Campaign Service of the

Strategic Communications Division. Within each section, an individual was assigned as thematic focal point for each communication priority. For those client offices located in Geneva or Vienna, the relevant United Nations Information Service acted as focal point. Between January and March 2003, more than 40 working-level meetings were held. From March 2003 to October 2003, a total of 19 high-level meetings were held between the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information and the Under-Secretary-General of each client office. A written brief was later developed reflecting the agreements reached on the overall priorities of each client department.

9. The Department has begun to report to clients on the results of implementing a communications strategy, including through compilations of media coverage generated. The Department has recently circulated a survey to ascertain the level of satisfaction of partner departments. While it is still early to reach a definitive conclusion, it is clear that the planning process provides a good tool which the Department of Public Information can use to further dialogue and exchange information with substantive departments and to increase understanding of the effectiveness of activities undertaken in support of their work.

B. System-wide coordination

10. In addition to the client-consultation process, the Department of Public Information has strengthened its efforts to bring the members of the United Nations system within a common communications framework. The United Nations Communications Group, led by the Department of Public Information, is key to this objective. Created in January 2002 at the initiative of the Department of Public Information, the Group has emerged as a strong communications platform by providing, *inter alia*, general policy advice on public information matters of common interest. On average, 30 members attend the regular meetings of the Group. Participation in the annual meeting of the Group has increased by 20 per cent, from 27 member organizations at the first such meeting, held in June 2002, to 33 in June 2003. A summary of the Group's activities over the past 12 months is provided in the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Communications Group in 2003 (A/AC.198/2004/5).

11. As implied by the term, system-wide coordination extends well beyond the offices located at United Nations Headquarters. The heads of United Nations information centres have become full-fledged members of the United Nations country team in developing countries and countries with economies in transition. They now chair or co-chair close to 80 per cent of the theme groups on public information and communications in the field, a development spurred by the increasing emphasis on advocacy by the United Nations Development Group. The cooperation with the country team has been further strengthened with the implementation of the recommendation of the Office of Internal Oversight Services recommendation that all field offices should produce annual work plans which outline, among other things, activities that will be undertaken in cooperation with or in support of the country team.¹ The work plans, which incorporate the client department information strategies, are meant to give the field offices strategic guidance on key United Nations priorities and help them focus their outreach efforts. In the course of the year, these strategies were complemented by 38 strategic

guidelines to aid with their implementation. In 2003, 84 per cent of United Nations information centres submitted new work plans.

12. As a result, the field offices have focused more closely on the Organization's key priorities. For example, from 1 January to 31 October 2003, the total number of media events organized to promote the Millennium Development Goals by United Nations information centres was 568, an average of seven events per information centre. These efforts have also resulted in a change of focus, with the field offices devoting more attention to media and educational outreach and less to public and special events. Compared with the previous biennium, 2002-2003 saw an increase of 8.5 per cent in educational activities, for example, while there was a decrease of 9.5 per cent in general outreach activities over the same period.

13. An important element in the continuing reorientation of the Department of Public Information is the rationalization of the network of United Nations information centres around regional hubs, starting with the creation of a Western European hub. The proposal for rationalization, contained in the report of the Secretary-General on reform (A/57/387), was noted by the General Assembly in its resolution 57/300 of 20 December 2002 and reaffirmed the following year in resolution 58/101 B. Following consultations with the Member States of the United Nations that are members of the European Union, the Department of Public Information implemented the first step of the Secretary-General's proposal by closing the nine United Nations information centres in Western Europe on 31 December 2003 and simultaneously establishing a new Regional United Nations Information Centre in Brussels, which began operations on 1 January 2004. The establishment of the Brussels centre is a first step towards applying a similar approach to other regions over the next two years, with a view to making more efficient and cost-effective use of the resources available to strengthen the Organization's communications work in the field. Information on further regionalization is contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the rationalization of the network of United Nations information centres (A/AC.198/2004/3).

C. A culture of evaluation

14. In response to the requests by the General Assembly in its resolutions 57/300 and 58/101 B, and with support from the Office of Internal Oversight Services, the Department has developed an annual programme impact review to systematically evaluate its products and activities. As reflected throughout the present report, the continuing promotion and refinement of a culture of evaluation and performance management is now an integral part of the reorientation of the Department of Public Information. In order to institutionalize this culture, the Department has successfully provided training to its staff to ensure the necessary analytical expertise for valid and reliable data collection on programmed activities. As a result, 90 per cent of all programme managers of the Department at Headquarters have participated in one or more training sessions. As an initial step in the three-year project between the Department of Public Information and the Office of Internal Oversight Services, the first annual programme impact review was successfully completed in January 2004.

15. The impact review employs a results-based framework similar to that of the programme budget, incorporating self-evaluation in the daily work of programme

managers. The initial steps of the review have consisted of establishing baseline data in order to track future performance. In the first implementation phase, from February to July 2003, through a series of facilitated discussions, programme managers identified and validated departmental and divisional goals based on the Department's mission statement. In the second phase, from September to November 2003, workshops were held with staff at all levels in order to draft performance indicators for the review. While the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005 prepared in 2002 includes 12 indicators, by the end of 2003, the Department had formulated 170 performance indicators to enable programme managers to comprehensively assess all their activities, as requested by the General Assembly. By the January session of the annual programme impact review, programme managers had collected baseline data on two thirds of these indicators. The Department's efforts in establishing baseline data is exemplified by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, which conducted a survey among its users to assess their awareness of and satisfaction with library services. Based on the survey results, the Library has increased its outreach efforts and will be periodically assessing the impact of this campaign against the targets it has set. Other services of the Department are also using the same tools. Some of their indicators aim to gauge performance through the level of exposure to messages, for example, the placement rate of op-ed articles by senior United Nations officials in local and national newspapers, or the number of listeners of United Nations Radio programmes reached by partner stations in each region. Over 30 performance indicators are designed to help link the Department's products and activities more precisely to the needs of target audiences through user feedback. Evaluation results will also be used by programme managers to direct the reallocation of resources based on programme performance. For example, data collected on the results of United Nations information centres' activities will be used in the decision-making process for their rationalization.

16. Since the evaluation of programme impact requires resources not currently available, the Department has developed a cooperative framework with international professional organizations in the communications field. These partnerships will enable the Department to access feedback from target audiences beyond its internal capacities, producing rigorous evaluations of the impact of its work. In recognition of the Department's efforts, the United Nations Foundation, a private foundation based in the United States of America, has established an award for the best research on the effectiveness and impact of United Nations public information and communications activities.

III. New communications challenges

17. Over the past year, the war in Iraq and the subsequent developments, including the attack against the United Nations office in Baghdad on 19 August 2003, remained at the centre of international attention. For the Department of Public Information, it posed twin challenges. On the one hand, it had to explain the role of the United Nations in post-war Iraq and its future direction; and, on the other, to convince the world at large that there were other critical areas that needed equal, if not more, attention.

A. The crisis in Iraq

18. Virtually all parts of the Department were involved in ensuring full and timely coverage of the many issues and activities relating to Iraq with which the Organization was concerned. The issue had a deep impact, much of it adverse, on the image of the Organization around the world. The primary thrust, therefore, of the Department's efforts was concentrated on the development and dissemination of a coherent, coordinated and timely United Nations system response to the issue as it evolved.

19. To this end, an Inter-Agency Task Force on Iraq was convened and chaired by the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information. This group, which brought together the relevant political, humanitarian, legal and other substantive offices, met regularly throughout the first part of 2003 to forge a common public information strategy on Iraq. The Task Force approved the establishment of a press briefing capacity in Amman in the event of military action, which was set up and staffed through the coordinated efforts of a number of departments, funds, programmes and agencies, including the Department of Public Information. During its period of operation in March, daily press briefings on United Nations activities were provided by an inter-agency team, moderated by a staff member of the Department, to the large number of national, regional and international media gathered in Amman. This was supplemented by regular interviews for specific media, as requested. The high level of attendance and feedback from media representatives confirmed the utility of this United Nations information capacity in the region. Live audio from the Amman centre was sent to Geneva and New York, and used for daily United Nations Radio programming, which was extended to seven days a week during this period, with uploading onto the specially prepared Iraq news focus page on the United Nations News Centre, where one-stop access to all the latest information on Iraq throughout the United Nations system was provided.

20. An essential element in the coordinated communications strategy on Iraq was the development of regular guidance for senior officials and other senior staff, in particular, the directors of United Nations information centres and offices, whose duties include speaking to the media. The Department was responsible for drafting this guidance, clearing it through all relevant offices and disseminating it in a timely manner. This was supplemented by regular reviews — sometimes three times a week — of press reporting and commentary on Iraq. The guidance to senior officials was supplemented by coordinated efforts to make United Nations officials available to the media on key occasions. These information efforts were vital in protecting the Organization's image and concerns.

B. Strategic priorities

21. While the crisis in Iraq and the political and security developments surrounding it remain at the centre of media attention, the Department of Public Information, using every means at its disposal, continues to promote global awareness and greater understanding of the work of the United Nations in priority areas. Its efforts are guided by the priorities laid down by the General Assembly and those established by the Secretary-General at the beginning of his second term. The Department, which is also guided by resolution 58/101 B which, in paragraph 8

refers to the United Nations Millennium Declaration² and paragraph 9 of the Millennium Development Goals, has been paying particular attention to such major issues as the eradication of poverty, conflict prevention, sustainable development, human rights, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and the needs of the African continent. The Department, in cooperation with the relevant substantive departments and offices of the United Nations system, has begun to devise and implement communications strategies to promote the work of the United Nations in those areas.

IV. Communications campaigns: speaking with one voice

22. The Department of Public Information, in close coordination with partners and client departments, continues to raise public awareness and to help shape public debate on the goals and priorities of the Organization through targeted outreach to media and other key actors. With the Strategic Communications Division in the lead, the Department has carried out issue-specific communications campaigns and promoted international conferences at which these issues are considered. A recent example of a successful communications campaign carried out by the Department relates to the World Summit on the Information Society, the first phase of which was held in Geneva, from 10 to 12 December 2003.

23. The Department, in partnership with the International Telecommunication Union, developed a strategy aimed at positioning the Summit as a multi-stakeholder meeting, broadening the agenda from a narrow discussion of technology to include a range of crucial issues, including freedom of expression and opinion and its corollary, press freedom. As a parallel event, the Department of Public Information, together with the European Broadcasting Union and the Government of Switzerland, organized the World Electronic Media Forum, which drew 621 participants representing 374 organizations from 112 countries, among them top leaders of broadcasting organizations, and provided the Department with a major platform to further develop its worldwide media partnerships. For the first time in media history, the heads of the World Broadcasting Unions adopted a common platform, the Broadcasters' Declaration, affirming the role of the broadcast media in the information society.

24. Another successful campaign related to combating HIV/AIDS. The Department, in cooperation with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), undertook a "media blitz" in the two weeks leading up to World AIDS Day, 1 December 2003. United Nations senior officials were asked to undertake proactive media activities within their own area of responsibility to emphasize the cross-cutting nature of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Three opinion articles, each signed by a senior United Nations official, were placed in selected newspapers in China, India and the Russian Federation, all of which considered critical zones for HIV/AIDS. In addition, an opinion article on women, violence and AIDS was published in connection with the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, which was celebrated one week before World AIDS Day. Thirty United Nations information centres reported on special activities, which generated an average of 31 newspaper clippings per country, as well as many national radio and television stories. A radio interview with the Secretary-General broadcast by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) was picked up around the world. In Bangladesh alone, the interview was covered by five different national newspapers.

25. The Department of Public Information's media work and communications strategy in the field of social and economic development resulted in thorough coverage by major international media outlets. Stories appeared in the *Financial Times*, *Der Spiegel*, Inter Press Service, Agence France-Presse and the BBC on the Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries, held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in August 2003. The Department organized the first three-city launch of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs *World Economic and Social Survey* on 23 June 2003 in New York, Geneva and Santiago, yielding strong stories in the *Financial Times*, *Le Monde*, *The Boston Globe*, and others. In addition, the Department continued its work to raise the profile of the Economic and Social Council. More than 30 stories were filed in European newspapers and global wire services on the Council's high-level segment. In observance of the International Year of Freshwater, the Department promoted the launch of the first edition of the *World Water Development Report* on 22 March and of the World Water Forum, from 22 to 25 March 2003 in Kyoto, Japan. An inter-agency op-ed article for World Water Day, signed by six heads of United Nations agencies and programmes, was placed by the United Nations information centres and services in Austria, Bangladesh, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy and Portugal. Media work for the High-level Political Signing Conference for the United Nations Convention against Corruption, held in Mérida, Mexico, in December 2003, included innovative press conferences involving leaders from the civil society sector in the fight against corruption. As a result, some 200 stories were filed in national newspapers, on CNN and BBC and in the international wire services.

26. The needs of the African continent continue to be addressed by the Department as a priority issue. The *Africa Recovery* magazine, which serves as the backbone of the Department's communications strategy on Africa, is now an internationally recognized source for information and analysis, in particular with regard to the New Partnership for Africa's Development. The magazine's printed version reaches some 33,000 readers, including 3,100 journalists, 2,700 non-governmental organization activists, 3,800 academics and 2,800 government or intergovernmental personnel. The online version, available on the United Nations web site (www.africarecovery.org), saw a 21 per cent increase in visitors between January and October 2003. Early results from a survey of readers of the printed version, done at the end of 2003, indicate that approximately 88 per cent of the information published on Africa is not readily available elsewhere.

27. The Department has also made concerted efforts to reach out to the public and to the media in the Arab world. An innovation of particular importance has been the designation in the Department of a focal point for Arab media. Relevant press materials have been translated into Arabic and distributed by the focal point in a timely manner to some 300 media outlets in the Middle East and beyond and to the network of United Nations information centres in the region. In forging links with the Arab media, special emphasis has been placed on direct contacts via telephone and e-mail to provide information on questions relating to the United Nations and the Middle East. The Department has also continued its work within the framework of its special information programme on the Question of Palestine. In October 2003, the Department organized an international media seminar in Seville, Spain, with the theme "Towards a two-State solution". The seminar provided a forum for over 150 media representatives and international experts to discuss, among other things, the role of the media in the conflict, and the role of culture, literature and education in

facilitating a dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians, and the role of civil society in achieving peace. The twelfth seminar in this series is scheduled to take place in Beijing in June 2004.

United Nations peacekeeping and public information

28. The Department's support for peacekeeping has focused on helping to lay the ground for effective deployment of public information components in new missions, including the development of their communications strategies and alignment of their work with strategic goals. In this regard, the Department fielded staff for three integrated assessment missions to help to formulate recommendations for new or expanding peacekeeping operations, and supported a fourth. The Department loaned one staff member to the United Nations Mission in Liberia to design the Mission's public information component and to help launch its information strategy. In December 2003, the Department brought together, in Dakar, senior public information officers and operational experts from peacekeeping missions in Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and Sierra Leone, to design a communications strategy on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

29. Most recently, the Department has turned its attention to building a strategy to publicize new peacekeeping activities, particularly in Africa. The aim of the strategy is, among other things, to garner support among key decision makers, in particular with regard to troop contributions and other assistance. This new focus parallels the Department's efforts to promote the new and varied roles of peacekeepers in the context of observances such as International Peacekeepers Day, and to update and expand the peacekeeping web site. In this connection, new web pages provide greater variety and depth of information with greater emphasis on content originating in the field. Expanding access by users is an indication of this strategy's success: there was an increase of 59 per cent in page visits in 2003 than in 2002. The Department has also provided assistance to peacekeeping missions in developing their web sites.

30. The Department has made a concerted effort to publicize United Nations measures on counter-terrorism. United Nations information centres, in particular, have used a wide range of tools to do this. For example, the United Nations Information Service in Vienna organized a workshop on terrorism and the media, providing guidance to journalists in the region on terrorism reporting and their role in shaping opinion. The United Nations Information Service in Bangkok has initiated an educational outreach programme that includes a travelling lecture series targeting high schools and universities throughout the Asia and the Pacific region.

V. Reaching the media: getting the message out

31. One of the principal objectives of the Department is to increase the interest in and access of media organizations and other important intermediaries to the work of the United Nations, by making available timely, objective and balanced information on the activities of the Organization. This effort is led by the News and Media Division, which has continued to expand its daily news output across all media,

using the traditional means as well as the new information communications technologies, to a growing range of key media in all regions of the world.

32. The online United Nations News Centre, which has been available in all the official languages since September 2003, has continued to reach a wider global audience. Visits to the United Nations News Centre web site (English only) rose from 705,945 in December 2002 to over 4.4 million in December 2003. This is well in excess of the target for the end of the biennium 2002-2003 of 1.4 million visits. The daily e-mail service, available in English and French, has also grown significantly. As at December 2003, it has 22,053 subscribers in 130 countries, up from 4,800 in January 2002. The site's growing popularity and the level of satisfaction among its users is also evidenced by the number of external web sites that are creating regular or fixed direct links to the News Centre, such as PolitInfo.com, Dev-Zone.org, *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Guardian* (both London), the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the Australian Trade Commission.

33. The growth of United Nations radio and television services has been equally successful. Nearly 140 radio stations in 75 countries, with an estimated audience of over 130 million, broadcast United Nations Radio programmes in seven different languages on a daily or weekly basis. United Nations Radio's broadcast partners now include Belarus Radio Channel One, Radio Beijing, Arab States Broadcasting Union, Voice of America, Radio Vatican, Voice of Nigeria and Deutsche Welle International. In a questionnaire sent to the major syndicators who disseminate the Department's live feed transmissions via satellite to client stations around the world, all respondents expressed complete satisfaction with the quality of the material provided and its timeliness. As for television services, some 90 television stations in 40 countries, with an estimated audience reach of 1 billion, are now taking United Nations programming. These stations include: CNN, CCTV in China, Doordarshan New Delhi, Radio Television Portuguese, Réseau France Outre Mer, South African Broadcasting, which covers all of Africa, and Orbit Communications, which covers the Middle East. One such product, "The Year in Review" (2003), was aired in 159 countries over 210 stations.

34. An important service to the media is provided by the Office of the Spokesman for the Secretary-General. The Organization's official position on matters in the news is conveyed by that Office through briefings, official statements, interviews and background briefings. The Office provides, via the United Nations web site, transcripts of all the Secretary-General's remarks to the press, issues his official statements and updates his daily appointments and travel records. The Office of the Spokesman also provides the Secretary-General and other officials in the United Nations system with regular daily updates of media coverage of the United Nations and all relevant international issues.

35. The intensification of media interest in the activities of the Organization is exemplified by the activities of the Media Accreditation and Liaison Unit, which had a banner year, recording the highest statistics in each of its activities. In 2003, correspondents accredited to Headquarters totalled 10,391, reaching a peak during the period from January to March, when the Security Council deliberated on the issue of Iraq, and during the general debate of the General Assembly.

36. The Department's efforts to provide better and faster media services have been widely recognized. In a survey on the usefulness of press releases, 11 delegations

(chosen for their geographic diversity) expressed their satisfaction with the service, including its timeliness. Between 68 and 70 per cent of releases are issued within two hours of the end of the meeting covered, which exceeds the target of 65 per cent.

37. Increased timeliness has also been achieved in the area of photos, with the introduction of a full digital system, which enables faster posting of shots onto the Internet. Photos can be made available to clients within minutes of an event. Photo wire agencies have confirmed their satisfaction with the quality and timeliness of United Nations photos.

38. Despite these improvements, the Department faces a number of challenges. A radio survey conducted in 2002, for example, confirmed the relative lack of coverage in many parts of Asia, outside China. This issue will be addressed in the biennium 2004-2005, along with expanding programming on and to Africa. The high costs and intense competitiveness of television also presents enormous challenges. Given its very limited resources with which to meet the objective of expanding its global audience, the Department is actively seeking co-productions with a number of external partners and ways to coordinate resources within the United Nations system. The Department is also investing in new technologies that will permit increased productivity and greatly enhance connectivity to the field.

United Nations web site

39. The increasing utilization of online information products of the Department, especially the United Nations News Centre, mirrors a significant overall growth in visits to the United Nations web site. Hits have grown from 1.6 billion in 2002 to over 2.1 billion in 2003, exceeding the target by over 100 million. On an average day, over 940,000 pages are viewed by users, up from 720,000 page views daily in 2002. In 2003, substantial increases in the visits to the language sites have been recorded: 126 per cent for Arabic, 792 per cent for Chinese, 77 per cent for English, 108 per cent for French, 173 per cent for Russian and 115 per cent for Spanish. The wide range in increased visits reflects much lower base utilization in some languages, the phenomenal growth in overall Internet use in some countries, such as China, as well as the significant measures taken by the Department to make more pages available in the official languages, as part of the drive to attain language parity on the Web. The implementation of the new search engine in all languages is also making it much easier to locate these materials.

40. Live and archived webcasts of United Nations conferences, meetings and events are becoming increasingly popular, with users viewing these webcasts from over 140 countries. For example, in September 2003 alone, over 809,559 users from 144 countries viewed the more than 246 hours of live and archived webcasts presented during the month. During 2004, the Department will further expand its capacity to provide webcasts simultaneously in official languages.

41. For the overall web site, the Department has managed to increase the number of pages available in some languages by use of external pro bono translations provided by academic institutions. It has already signed agreements with the University of Salamanca (Spain) and Shaoxing University (China) and is in the process of concluding one with Minsk State Linguistic University (Belarus).

Discussions are at an advanced stage for similar arrangements for the translation of material into Arabic.

42. The Department is constantly aware of the need to ensure access to content on the web site for all users; special measures are being implemented for users with disabilities. According to the technical guidelines of the Working Group on Internet Matters of the Publications Board, content-providing offices are encouraged to ensure that all new pages developed conform, to the extent possible, to acceptable standards pertaining to access by persons with disabilities. The guidelines further require that text equivalent should be provided for non-text elements. The Department is studying the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines of the World Wide Web Consortium, with a view to incorporating the major recommendations into the next version of the technical guidelines, subject to cost implications.

43. As a step towards the implementation of General Assembly decision 57/579, and in keeping with the proposals presented by the Secretary-General in his report strengthening the Department of Public Information, within the existing capacity, in order to support and enhance the United Nations web site in all official languages of the Organization (A/57/355), one P-4 post and six General Service posts have been redeployed to the Website Section to enhance its language capacity and consolidate its design, programming and presentation. The Section has been realigned and language clusters created to provide additional capacity, as well as to enhance synergies. With these increased resources, the Department will be able to make more news and general information available on the web site in all six official languages. This will include the establishment of an e-mail news service in all official languages to back up the six United Nations news services already in operation. However, it has not yet been possible to identify all of the resources requested in the above-mentioned report of the Secretary-General to further the goal of language parity on the United Nations web site. The Department is constantly reviewing the situation, as well as the implementation of decision 57/579, which will be carried out incrementally so as to minimize the impact on other mandated activities. Only when the resources within the Department of Public Information and in other content-generating departments and offices are fully in place will it be possible to designate a future date from which parity can be ensured for new materials on the web site.

44. It is important to point out that providing content in all official languages on the United Nations web site is the responsibility of all content-generating offices of the Secretariat. The Department of Public Information, as manager of the web site, continues to assist other departments in making their content available in all languages. However, thus far, only one other department has made part of its content on the web site available in all the official languages.

VI. Connecting with the public: building partnerships

45. As the "public voice" of the Organization, connecting with the public at large and creating synergies remain vital for the Department. The newly created Outreach Division has been working with additional vigour to take United Nations messages and resources to civil society, in particular, non-governmental organizations, educators, students and private sector partners, in an increasingly integrated fashion, using a variety of both established and innovative channels.

46. Educational outreach, for example, is being enhanced largely through innovative electronic communications. The Global Teaching and Learning Project, created in 1996 to produce educational material for schools, is now participating in an increasing number of online educational partnerships. It has helped to create a new Global School Networks Alliance linking more than 50 national school networks to help teachers and students get more involved in global issues and to offer opportunities for them to collaborate on projects related to the Millennium Development Goals. The project's popular web site, United Nations Cyberschoolbus, continues to engage students around the world. The total number of countries reached each month by the Cyberschoolbus site in 2003 averaged 140, while the total number of pages viewed per month ranged from roughly 500,000 to a little more than 1 million.

47. An integral part of the Department's educational outreach efforts is the quarterly *UN Chronicle*. Now published in the six official languages and available on the United Nations web site, the *UN Chronicle* has been strategically repositioned to give it a dual focus as a journal for academic and educational outreach and for informed debate and exchange of information and ideas among educators, policy makers and thematic experts. Between January and December 2003, the monthly figures for visits to the *UN Chronicle Online* tripled for both the English as well as the French web sites, with over 100,000 page views in December 2003. The thematic biweekly *UN Chronicle* E-Alert is sent to over 1,400 non-governmental organizations and 1,800 individual subscribers, including the permanent missions to the United Nations. The newly developed online United Nations Education Portal, which includes links to educational resources available throughout the United Nations system, now serves as an information hub and resource for teachers and educational institutions.

48. The Department's training programme for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries, now named after Reham Al-Farra, a Department of Public Information staff member killed in the attack on the United Nations office in Baghdad, continues to address the training needs of journalists from developing countries. By providing comprehensive knowledge about the work and activities of the United Nations system, the programme has helped to create long-term interest in the United Nations among those participating. In a recent survey conducted among past participants, 60 per cent of them reported that they had incorporated United Nations-related issues in their professional work within the past 12 months. Two thirds of them noted that the programme was "very helpful" for furthering their careers and all participants said they would recommend it to other journalists. To date, 341 people from 150 countries have participated in the programme.

49. United Nations Publications activities in sales and marketing continues to focus on increasing outreach to a broad spectrum of markets, a main target of which is the academic community. These activities include mailing over 450,000 brochures and catalogues, transmitting 180,000 targeted e-mails, reaching close to 4 million readers of specialized journals through advertisements. Despite a strong recession in key markets, these efforts enabled sales to be maintained at the 2002 level. The Development Business Trust Fund has been successfully integrated into the Section, bringing with it the synergies of combined marketing and sales activities, as well as the management benefits stemming from the agglomeration of similar programmes. At the same time, the overall effectiveness of sales outreach has been enhanced

through closer cooperation, including joint promotional activities, with other areas of the Outreach Division.

50. The Department continues to organize traditional programmes to brief visitors, educators and students. Whether at Headquarters or in the field, activities organized by the Department are often the result of partnerships with civil society, as well as with the United Nations system. For example, the official commemoration of World AIDS Day 2003 was co-sponsored by the Department and UNAIDS with the African Services Committee, the Church World Service and several non-governmental organizations, foundations and private companies. The event was held outside United Nations Headquarters for the first time at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City and was open to the public. Due to easier access, the number of participants nearly quadrupled, compared to the past World AIDS Day observances held at United Nations Headquarters. The Annual Students Conference on Human Rights is now organized as a multi-site videoconference programme, with participants in 2003, from Canada, the Dominican Republic, Mexico and several locations in the United States of America. Through the webcast and discussion boards, students in China, India, Kenya, Romania, Sweden, the Philippines and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland were also able to join. The International Day of Peace is now being observed on 21 September through an expanded videoconference programme, which brings together non-governmental representatives and students from some 40 countries.

51. The Department has also pursued the development and implementation of innovative media partnerships through its UN Works programme. One groundbreaking initiative includes a ten-part original television series for family audiences hosted by United Nations goodwill ambassadors and others. The series, which examines key issues, such as girls' education, HIV/AIDS, poverty, sustainable development, landmines, child soldiers and child labour, through the eyes of children, reaches an estimated audience of between 3.5 and 3.9 million.

52. The Department has stepped up its outreach to non-governmental partners beyond United Nations Headquarters. The Non-Governmental Organization Section of the Outreach Division arranged, for the first time, to have the seven plenary sessions of the fifty-sixth annual Department of Public Information/Non-Governmental Organization Conference, entitled "Human security and dignity: fulfilling the promise of the United Nations", and held from 8 to 10 September 2003, webcast live over the United Nations web site (www.un.org). In partnership with non-governmental organizations, a special interactive web site was designed that enabled viewers to access the opening and closing sessions and the five plenary panel discussions, to participate via their personal computers in a discussion forum for each session and e-mail questions directly to the moderators of the panels. All of the sessions are archived for further viewing on the United Nations site. Internet visitors from over 25 countries tuned into the Conference via the interactive media platform. This innovative project will be replicated at the fifty-seventh annual Department of Public Information/Non-Governmental Organization Conference scheduled for 8 to 10 September 2004. The Conference, regarded as the premier event of the non-governmental organization community at United Nations Headquarters each year, now counts on the participation of 2,000 representatives from more than 600 non-governmental organizations in over 80 countries. In 2003, 40 per cent of the non-governmental organization representatives who attended were from 60 developing countries, twice the number from previous years.

53. The restructuring of the Department and, specifically, the creation of the Civil Society Service within the Outreach Division, has yielded a number of positive results, among them, allowing understaffed areas, such as the Exhibits Unit, to benefit from the underlying infrastructure afforded by belonging to a larger entity, the Public Relations Section. The closer relationship that now exists between exhibits and the guided tour operation as a result has also enhanced promotional efforts aimed at attracting visitors to United Nations Headquarters. With regard to the guided tours, despite a drop in attendance early in 2003 owing to heightened security alerts and travel restrictions as a result of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, the operation finished the year with attendance rebounding to the levels of 2000.

VII. Towards knowledge management: responding to growing needs

54. Led by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, the Department of Public Information continues to deliver a wide range of services to delegations, Secretariat staff, scholars, depository libraries and the general public. In addition, through its active participation in the Steering Committee for the Modernization and Integrated Management of United Nations Libraries, it is assuming a leading role in the coordination of joint activities among the libraries of the Organization.

55. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library is also collaborating with the Information Technology Services Division of the Office of Central Support Services, which has primary responsibility for the Official Document System (ODS), and with the Department for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Management in enlarging the range of documents available on the system. The Library has been digitizing pre-1993 documents for uploading to ODS since 1999. At present, in view of the imminent opening up of the system to the public at large (scheduled for the fourth quarter of 2004), and as a first initiative with respect to archival collections, the Library is working with its partners to identify and fill gaps in ODS, 1993 to the present. This will ensure that the system becomes a more complete repository of United Nations documentation for the period covered. Furthermore, now that links have been created directly from all relevant bibliographic, speech and voting records in the Library's publicly available online catalogue (UNBISNET) to the full texts of available documents on ODS, access to documentation has been greatly enhanced. The Library also assists other departments in preparing their own materials for posting. For example, in cooperation with the Office of the Panel of Council, the Library has digitized all Administrative Tribunal judgements and uploaded them to the ODS, together with metadata, that is, cataloguing/indexing data, drawn from United Nations Bibliographic Information System (UNBIS) files.

56. The Library has also been increasing its outreach activities. As at January 2004, there were 408 depository libraries worldwide receiving United Nations documents and publications. In order to improve their effectiveness, a workshop was held in Pretoria from 31 July to 2 August 2003, for 13 depository librarians, from Southern Africa, providing hands-on training in accessing United Nations documentation and web sites. In order to encourage the depositories themselves to engage in outreach, regular e-mail alerts are sent to over 300 libraries able to receive and often to disseminate such messages. The Library also conducts a regular

training programme to help with individual research needs and to prepare new delegates for dealing with General Assembly documentation. In 2003, it offered 105 such sessions to a total of 678 trainees. The Library has also expanded its outreach to educational institutions. For the second year in a row, library science students from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, United States, have spent their spring break working on various projects within the Library. Specialized training requests (e.g., from teachers from the United Nations Association of Sweden, students from Macalester College (United States) and Kansei Gakuin University (Japan)) are regularly accommodated. The Library also participates in mentoring programmes for young people.

VIII. Conclusions

57. The reorientation and restructuring of the Department of Public Information has helped the Organization to move closer to achieving a key goal of the Secretary-General's reform proposals, namely, enhancing public information. A clearer conception of the Department's role and a more coherent elaboration of its functions has been established. Working strategically, and not just tactically, the Department has been able to emphasize not only the immediate, but also the long-term goals of the Organization. With its activities aligned with its overall priorities, a more effective client consultation mechanism in place, and a system-wide coordination that involves people and organizations at all levels, the Department is now better equipped to achieve its mandate.

58. The efforts of the Department are driven by the stated priority of the Secretary-General to revitalize public confidence in the Organization by "bringing the United Nations closer to the people". By identifying strategic ways to reach out to civil society and recognizing the partnerships and substantive programmes that most clearly articulate the call for multilateral solutions to the complex challenges before the international community, the Department has worked towards achieving the greatest public impact. Furthermore, the new culture of evaluation and accountability now at the centre of its operational activities offers a strong incentive for the staff of the Department to do better what matters most.

59. Like reform, reorientation is a continuing process, not an event. As this process evolves, the Department will continue to evaluate its performance and adapt its work programme to ensure that it contributes to fulfilling the substantive purposes of the Organization and that the story of the United Nations is told effectively and well.

Notes

¹ See the note by the Secretary-General on the review of the structure and operations of United Nations information centres (A/57/747).

² See General Assembly resolution 55/20.

³ For an in-depth review of Library activities, see A/AC.198/2004/4.

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**Rationalization of the network of United Nations
information centres****Report of the Secretary-General****Summary*

Pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 57/300 and 58/101 B, the present report provides details on the progress made regarding implementation of the regionalization initiative in Western Europe and in other high-cost developed countries, and sets out the proposed strategy and modalities for the implementation of the initiative in other regions. The report also addresses the follow-up to the recommendations of the Office of Internal Oversight Services to streamline and revitalize the operations of information centres (A/57/747).

Section II of the report addresses regionalization as a key feature of the reform of the Department of Public Information. Section III focuses on Western Europe and the establishment of a new regional United Nations information centre in Brussels, and examines the situation in other high-cost developed countries and countries with economies in transition. Section IV reviews the current situation in other regions, providing facts and figures and an analysis of the challenges they face. Section V addresses the objectives and financial implications of the initiative in other regions. Section VI sets out the Department's strategic vision for further regionalization, addresses, among other issues, the special circumstances prevailing in developing countries, and provides details regarding strategizing on a regional level.

Section VII presents a proposed new model, which will be based on the guidelines and criteria for the regionalization of United Nations information centres, and section VIII proposes how to adapt the model to the geographic and cultural characteristics of each region.

* The document was submitted late without the explanation required under paragraph 8 of General Assembly resolution 53/208 B, by which the Assembly decided that, if a report is submitted late, the reason should be included in a footnote to the document.



Section IX concludes that implementation of the regionalization initiative will enable the Department to strengthen the flow and exchange of information on the United Nations in developing countries, within the resources allocated by the Assembly. A flexible regionalization process is proposed, and it is stated that the views of the Committee on Information will be taken fully into account in the continuing process, in consultation with Member States, with the aim of meeting the Secretary-General's deadline over a three-year period that began in 2003.

Annex I provides information on United Nations information centres and United Nations houses; annex II sets out the guidelines and criteria for regionalization of United Nations information centres; and annex III contains details on fulfilling the information mandate in developing countries.

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I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 15 of its resolution 57/300, the General Assembly took note of the proposal of the Secretary-General, contained in action 8 of his report entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387 and Corr.1), to rationalize the network of United Nations information centres around regional hubs, where appropriate, in consultation with concerned Member States, starting with the creation of a Western European hub, followed by a similar approach in other high-cost developed countries, and requested the Secretary-General to submit a progress report on the implementation of the proposal with the objective of applying this initiative in other regions, in consultation with Member States, where this initiative will strengthen the flow and exchange of information in developing countries.
2. In its resolution 58/101 B, the Assembly reaffirmed the above-mentioned proposal and requested that further information on United Nations information centres be provided to the Committee on Information. It also requested the Secretary-General to submit further detailed information on the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the review of the structure and operations of the information centres (A/57/747), and requested the Secretary-General to report in detail to the Committee on the progress made by the Department of Public Information to support the consolidation of United Nations field presences into United Nations houses.
3. On 20 January 2004, at a meeting of the Bureau of the Committee, it was decided that all information that had been requested relating to the information centres should be included in the present report and submitted to the Committee at its twenty-sixth session.
4. A note providing details on United Nations information centres and United Nations houses is contained in annex I.

II. Regionalization as a key feature of the reform of the Department of Public Information

5. The new media landscape compels the Organization to find different solutions to those that had worked well 20 years ago (see A/57/387, action 8). Even though the information centres account for a large proportion of the overall budget of the Department, there are such a large number of them, that many are thinly staffed and poorly resourced. With successive zero-growth budgets and targeted cuts occurring at the same time as a significant expansion in the activities of the Organization, some centres are struggling to make a significant contribution. If the Department's field presence is to be effective in the current budgetary climate, there is no option but to rationalize the network of information centres around regional hubs.

III. Western Europe and other high-cost developed countries, and countries with economies in transition

A. Establishment of a regional United Nations information centre in Brussels

6. Following consultations with the member States of the European Union, as well as bilateral discussions with concerned Governments, the Department closed the nine information centres in Western Europe on 31 December 2003 and, on 1 January 2004, established a regional United Nations information centre in Brussels. The United Nations information services in Geneva and Vienna, which support the United Nations Offices in those cities, were not affected.

7. In January 2004, the Secretary-General and the Vice Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Belgium concluded an agreement on that Government's offer to host the new regional information centre in Brussels. Under the terms of the agreement, the Government provides rent-free premises to the centre and an annual cash contribution of \$50,000 for the next four years for the translation of information materials into local languages.

8. The centre, which was officially inaugurated on 30 January 2004 by the Prime Minister of Belgium and the Secretary-General, will serve as the principal source of information on the United Nations for the countries of Western Europe. The establishment of the modern and fully resourced centre, with a staff of 23, including a Director at the D-1 level, nine Professional and 13 General Service staff, should enable the Organization to implement a more robust, coherent and coordinated public information outreach programme in the region.

9. At the time of submission of the present report, the regional information centre had only been in operation for two months. Its full complement of staff was not yet in place and it was occupying temporary office space. The move to permanent premises is expected to take place on 1 July 2004, once refurbishment is complete. It is, therefore, too early to evaluate the success of the regionalization initiative in Western Europe and its impact on the work of the Department.

B. Regionalization in other high-cost developed countries and in countries with economies in transition

10. In its resolution 58/101 B, the General Assembly endorsed the creation of the Western European regional information centre and requested the Secretary-General to examine the implementation of a similar approach in other high-cost developed countries. The Department currently maintains information centres in Sydney, Tokyo and Washington, D.C.

11. The Department has successfully negotiated an agreement with the Government of Australia to relocate the information centre in Sydney to rent-free premises in Canberra, which would release funds for programme activities in the Pacific region, which includes seven developing countries. This should enable the information centre to better fulfil its role as a regional information centre, although additional resource, may be needed for this purpose.

12. In view of Japan's role in international affairs, including as a major donor, and the support it gives to the information centre in Tokyo, in the amount of an annual contribution of US\$ 200,000 for outreach activities, the Department sees no advantage in changing the current arrangements there.

13. The information centre in Washington, D.C., serves a broad constituency in the United States of America, including the Congress, the media, non-governmental organizations and the general public, and the Secretariat considers the liaison work it undertakes in the host country of United Nations Headquarters to be vital. The Secretary-General therefore intends to pursue economies in other ways, notably through a reduction in rented office space.

14. The Department maintains information centres in the capitals of four countries with economies in transition — Bucharest, Moscow, Prague and Warsaw. The information centre in Moscow is well established and is a natural candidate to become a regional centre. In due course and after consultations with the Governments concerned, the Department expects to make proposals regarding the future of the other three sites, as well as the information centre in Ankara. Any decision on the future of those information centres will take into account their host countries' progress towards the process of accession to the European Union, as well as the status of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) offices in each.

IV. Current situation in other regions

A. Facts and figures

15. There are currently 55 information centres, one regional information centre and two United Nations information services, which are managed and staffed by the Department. In addition, staff in eight information components in United Nations Offices report to the Department and their staff appear on the Department's staffing table. Of the 66 information offices within the Department's purview, 47 are located in developing countries.

16. Two developing country information centres, at Kabul and Managua, are currently not operational. Of the 45 functioning information centres in developing countries, 17 are headed by staff from the Department, 27 by resident coordinators, and one by a staff member of the United Nations Environment Programme. In total, the 45 centres have 18 Professional posts, 31 national information officer posts and 109 General Service posts.

17. The resource requirements for the two information services in Geneva and Vienna and the eight information components of United Nations field offices fall under section 28 (Public information) of the programme budget for 2004-2005. In addition, the Department maintains a post at the Professional level in the information service of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in Bangkok, and another in the office of the Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) in Beirut. Information units within the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in Addis Ababa, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) in Geneva and the Economic

Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in Santiago do not have Department staff.

B. Analysis

18. At present, there are a large number of information centres but they do not have adequate staff or resources, a fact confirmed by the Office of Internal Oversight Services in its above-mentioned report (see A/57/747). Too many of the information centres are currently unable to perform their essential functions — media liaison, knowledge management and outreach to educational institutions and civil society — satisfactorily and some are also unable to ensure accountability for their programmatic and administrative (including financial) responsibilities.

19. As part of several retrenchment exercises mandated by the Assembly in the 1990s, a number of Professional and local-level posts that were vacant were abolished or transferred to other centres to meet new demands. As a result, many centres were left severely understaffed. In a few cases, centres no longer have information posts and staff are only able to perform administrative functions.

20. The paucity of regular posts has made it difficult for the Organization to retain well qualified information professionals in its field offices. It has also led to a higher than normal expenditure of operational funds for general temporary assistance, at the expense of programme activities, such as travel for outreach purposes, and the translation and production of information materials. It is clear that the current arrangements are not sustainable.

21. In the developing world, each centre is normally charged with providing services to several countries. The 45 functioning developing country centres are charged with covering 121 countries. A careful review by the Department of the monthly activity reports confirms, however, that budgetary and resource constraints often restrict the centres from being able to extend their outreach activities beyond the capital city of their host country, a fact also noted by the Office of Internal Oversight Services.

22. Within the currently available resources, the existing network of information centres clearly cannot meet the outreach challenges for which it was established. The network, therefore, needs to be reconfigured.

V. Regionalization in other regions

A. Objectives

23. The overall objective of regionalization in regions other than those mentioned in section III is to strengthen the flow and exchange of information in developing countries. More specifically, the objective is to improve access to information on the United Nations for people not currently well served by the information centres, without reducing the service to those countries that find the current arrangements satisfactory.

24. In order to meet the above objectives and to make the most cost-effective use of scarce resources, it is the Secretary-General's view that resources should not be

allocated according to a framework that has proven to be more and more difficult to sustain, but should instead be distributed on the basis of a new model that would include a number of strategically located regional hubs. At the same time and wherever possible, a physical presence would be retained in countries serviced by these hubs through the posting of information staff in the offices of resident coordinators.

B. Financial means

25. The resources allocated by the Assembly to United Nations information centres have not increased in more than 10 years, although mandates have multiplied, new information centres have been opened, operating costs — including security and common charges for United Nations houses — have increased exponentially and staffing levels in information centres have been reduced, as inflation has taken its toll.

26. It should be recalled that one of the main factors that led to regionalization in Western Europe was the disproportionately large share of available senior posts and funding that was being absorbed by the centres in the region. Resources released through the establishment of the regional information centre in Brussels were to be redirected to United Nations information activities in developing countries and to multilingualism on the United Nations web site, as well as to the evaluation of the Department's activities.

27. However, in paragraph 39 of its resolution 58/271, the Assembly decided to reduce the allocation for information centres by \$2 million in operational resources. As a result, while some of the staff resources released with the establishment of the regional centre in Brussels, including three posts at the D-1 level and a number of General Service posts, are available for transfer to United Nations information activities in developing countries, the net effect of that budget cut, despite the savings, will be a net reduction in funds available for operational costs, and constitutes a crippling limitation on the Department's capacity to strengthen its information efforts in the developing world within the current configuration.

28. The challenge for the Department is, therefore, to review the structure of its field presence, within the limits of the resources granted to it by the Member States, in order to ensure the provision of information services around the world, in particular to developing countries. Regionalization would help attain that objective by pooling resources and redirecting them to a smaller number of strategically located information centres.

VI. Strategic vision

29. The global media landscape is undergoing dramatic changes. With the arrival of new information communication technologies and the unprecedented speed with which they have been incorporated into the global communications infrastructure, there has been a significant change in the production, promotion and distribution of publicly available information. Whether one lives in a metropolis or in a remote village, the "globalization of information" permeates our lives everywhere, every day.

30. While developed countries have been the main beneficiaries of the communications revolution, developing countries have embraced the new technologies and are making a concerted effort to adapt them gradually to their national and regional needs. It is true that the majority of people in developing countries still do not have direct access either to delivery services based on information and communication technologies (ICTs) or to the information products they provide. However, media operations, policy makers and a growing number of educational institutions in those countries are either already web-ready or taking measures to incorporate the new technologies.

31. Consequently, the focus of the communications operation of the network of information centres must also change. With the help of ICT-based networking, it is now possible for the information centres to serve a much wider audience and provide a vast array of information products simultaneously, in multiple languages and through multiple media. To mount an effective communications campaign, centres must have focused messages with clearly identifiable target audiences, and use the most appropriate communications tools with speed, innovation and variety. To remain relevant and to compete in the evolving communications environment, they must either adapt and change or face the possibility of becoming irrelevant.

32. In view of the dramatic shift in the global media landscape, the Department has reformulated its mission statement, focusing on fulfilling the substantive purposes of the Organization by communicating strategically to achieve the greatest public impact. With a renewed emphasis on effectiveness and efficiency, it has moved away from a previous outreach strategy that was based on the production and dissemination of information products and has shifted to the prioritization of key issues, management and coordination of information from various United Nations sources, the identification of communications partners and the evaluation of the Department's services and products. In an operational environment where the resource base is shrinking and target constituencies are expanding, the Department is keen to make the best use of appropriate partners, including media, civil society, educational institutions and private-sector entities, so that it can leverage its activities and achieve the greatest public impact.

33. The incorporation of results-based management, including self-evaluation, has significantly influenced the operational mechanism of the network of information centres and the communications tools they use to implement their mandates. Under the new organizational goals identified for each operational unit, all public information and communications activities are now being measured, not in terms of outputs but in terms of measurable results. The only way for the information centres to remain viable in the changed environment is for them to adapt to the new approach described above. That strategic vision underlies the proposal to further rationalize the network of information centres, while taking into consideration the circumstances unique to developing countries and to each region.

A. Revised guidelines and criteria

34. In applying the hub approach, the Department has used the guidelines and criteria for the regionalization of United Nations information centres provided in the Secretary-General's report on the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of communications and public information (see A/AC.198/2003, annex I). As a

result of the views expressed by Member States, including at the twenty-fifth session of the Committee on Information and in the debate on questions relating to information in the October 2003 session of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee, the guidelines and criteria have been revised. The revised guidelines and criteria are contained in annex II.

B. Special circumstances prevailing in developing countries

35. The Secretary-General is aware that the gap between developed and developing countries regarding access to information and communications technologies has continued to widen, and that vast segments of the populations in developing countries have yet to benefit from the information and technological revolution. The digital divide, especially the lack of connectivity, makes it all the more difficult to overcome the transportation and communications barriers that exist in much of the developing world.

36. The Secretary-General therefore proposes, wherever possible, to maintain a physical presence in each country that previously hosted a centre to supplement the outreach capacity of any regional hub that may be established. Having national information staff in United Nations system offices in such countries would not only ensure that the expertise of a hub was effectively communicated to people in those countries it served, but would also strengthen the capacity of United Nations country teams to perform information functions in their host countries.

C. Strategizing on a regional level

37. In many instances, United Nations public outreach activities can benefit from an analysis of the synergy within regions, based on common priorities, concerns or languages. In September 2003, the Department convened a strategic communications meeting at Headquarters for information officers from the Middle East and Arab region to discuss ways to enhance public understanding of the role and work of the United Nations in the region. Directors and national information officers from 13 information centres participated, along with information professionals from other United Nations entities represented in the region.

38. At the meeting, it became clear that many of the participants shared similar problems in trying to achieve effective dissemination of the United Nations message across the region, but they were able to pool their expertise and resources to develop consistent regional solutions to overcome these problems. The discussion resulted in agreement on a strategic communications framework for the region, which should help all United Nations information programmes in the region to better meet their objectives. The strategic regional approach also would allow United Nations information officers to tap into the expertise of the regional commissions and benefit from their small but well organized information infrastructures.

VII. Towards a new model

A. Preliminary steps

39. In accordance with paragraph 39 of resolution 58/101 B, the Department will use the three posts at the D-1 level, released with the establishment of the regional hub in Brussels, to strengthen the capacity of the information centres in three cities that are regional media hubs — one each in Africa, the Middle East and Arab region, and Latin America and the Caribbean — where there are currently no D-1 posts. This will contribute to a more balanced global distribution of the Department's senior posts.

40. The three posts at the D-1 level will be transferred as they become available. Since Cairo is the headquarters of the League of Arab States and an active media centre, the information centre in Cairo is a logical choice to receive a D-1 level post. So, too, is the information centre in Mexico City, given its wide reach to the international media. The Department proposes that the third D-1 post be located in Addis Ababa, as it is the headquarters of the Economic Commission for Africa and of the African Union. However, further resources will need to be transferred to that office before it can function effectively.

41. Pending the outcome of consultations with Member States on further regionalization, these information centres will not, for the time being, be formally designated as regional centres. However, once in position, their Directors will be asked to develop strategies for strengthening the regional information capacity of the United Nations and to develop outreach programmes for their respective regions.

B. New model

42. Using the guidelines and criteria, the Department proposes to establish regional information centres in key media hubs. Professional staff from the Department, supported by an appropriate number of staff, would head the regional centres. The regional centres would be equipped with a core level of operational resources. They would differ in size, but the objective would be for each to have the core staffing capacity needed to fulfil key tasks.

43. Unlike the model employed in Western Europe, the developing country model would not consist of one large hub covering a large number of countries, but rather a significant number of small hubs, located so as to ensure that distance and linguistic diversity do not inhibit their operation.

44. The regional model to be applied in developing countries would also differ significantly from the model employed in Western Europe in that the duty station for many of the staff of the hub would not be the hub itself. The lack of technological infrastructure and connectivity, as well as the geographical distances that have to be overcome mitigate in favour of maintaining a physical United Nations presence in those countries that currently have information centres. Information centres in the regions covered by the hubs would, for the most part, be closed, but the Department's national information staff would remain in the country, working out of the offices of the resident coordinators, benefiting from the administrative support of UNDP and serving as an integral part of the country team.

45. The proposed developing country model would take full advantage of the resident coordinator infrastructure present in most developing countries and would work in close collaboration with the United Nations Development Group. In particular, the Department would explore with the UNDG the possibility of retaining the library and resource centres of those information centres that would close.

46. The national information staff — national professionals with knowledge of the local languages and a background in communications — would be a key to the success of the regional model. The Department would seek to invest resources to train and equip the staff working through the hubs and in close cooperation with UNDG. Such a proposed investment would have the additional advantage of enhancing the skills and knowledge of nationals in developing countries.

47. The functions of the regional hub would include the development and implementation of region-wide communications campaigns and the provision of programme and administrative support to the national information staff in the countries served by the hub. Annex III contains further details concerning the division of responsibilities between the regional information centres and national information staff.

48. To be effective, the new model would require the allocation of adequate resources, and the ratio of expenditures on established posts to operational resources would need to be adjusted so that productive, innovative programmes could be carried out locally.

49. Although resident coordinators would continue to be the major spokespersons for the United Nations system in their respective countries, United Nations public outreach activities throughout a region would benefit from the experience and expertise of a senior staff member from the Department who would head the regional information centre. Such an arrangement would be an improvement over the current model, in which resident coordinators, many of whom have no previous experience in public information, are often assigned the additional role of Director of an information centre. The chain of command between the regional information centre, the office of the resident coordinator and the national information staff would be clearly defined, and the regional information centre and the Department would provide guidance and coordination.

50. With careful planning and coordination between the Department and UNDP, national information staff working out of the offices of the resident coordinators would also complement the existing network of UNDP communication staff in the region.

51. A key benefit of regionalization is that fewer resources would be devoted to administrative expenditures. Administrative functions would be pooled in regional hubs, thereby releasing more resources for programme activities. In 2003, two thirds of the General Service posts in developing countries (excluding national information officers) were devoted to secondary information support, such as administrative, clerical and driver tasks. With regionalization, a significant number of such posts would be more directly involved in information functions, thus boosting the outreach capacity.

52. The field information capacity of the Department covers 143 of the 191 States Members of the United Nations. The Assembly has repeatedly reaffirmed its role in relation to the opening of new United Nations information centres, at the request of

the countries concerned, most recently in its resolution 56/64 of 24 December 2001. It is therefore proposed that the new model be applied to all the countries currently served by the information centres.

VIII. Adapting the model

53. The Department recognizes that there are significant differences among regions and that, as a result, no single model can be successfully applied to all regions of the world. The Department intends to tailor the regionalization concept to the diverse geographic and cultural characteristics of each region.

54. To ensure structural coherence of United Nations activities at the regional level, the Department will work in close cooperation with the regional commissions. As representative entities of the United Nations at the regional level, the commissions have established infrastructures in place, including intergovernmental links and relationships with regional organizations, which can be used to maximize the Organization's information outreach capabilities.

55. Preliminary proposals for the possible locations of regional centres are provided below. Since the proposals have not yet been the subject of formal consultations with the Member States concerned, they should be seen only as preliminary suggestions.

A. League of Arab States region

56. Information centres are located in nine of the States members of the League of Arab States, namely, in the cities of Algiers, Beirut, Cairo, Khartoum, Manama, Rabat, Sana'a, Tripoli and Tunis. Six of the centres are headed by resident coordinators. Three Beirut, Cairo and Sana'a have staff from the Department who serve as Directors.

57. In order to strengthen the United Nations information capacity in this critical region, it is proposed that a central hub be established in Cairo to cover North Africa and to coordinate the work of all the information centres and local information staff in the region. Cairo would be an ideal site for the central hub as it is home to the headquarters of the League and other regional organizations, and is a major centre for production of Arabic language materials. Owing to the significant information challenges in the region, it is proposed to retain the existing information centres in Beirut, at the headquarters of ESCWA in Manama and in Sana'a.

B. Asian States

58. There are a total of 11 information centres (not including the information service in Bangkok) in the Asian States, namely, in the following cities: Colombo, Dhaka, Islamabad, Jakarta, Kabul (inoperational), Kathmandu, Manila, New Delhi, Tehran, Tokyo and Yangon. Five of the information centres are headed by resident coordinators and one is headed by a staff member of ESCAP. The remaining five centres (Islamabad, Jakarta, New Delhi, Tehran and Tokyo) have Directors who are still members of the Department.

59. ESCAP has underscored that, with 62 members, it is the largest of the regional commissions in terms of membership and the total population it serves. The effective dissemination of information in the region therefore poses a particular challenge and consideration must be given to its special linguistic needs and to the variance in levels of development and access to information technologies. In addition, geopolitical realities also constrain the possibility of converting any of the existing information centres into regional hubs.

60. Owing to those factors, it is envisaged that the Department would maintain a number of individual information centres, including those in: Islamabad, to cover Pakistan; New Delhi, to cover India and the other countries of the subregion; Tehran, to cover the Islamic Republic of Iran; and Tokyo, to cover Japan. The information centre in Islamabad would work in close collaboration with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, where an international staff member at the D-1 level heads the information component. Further to this, it is proposed that the information service in Bangkok, in addition to its information responsibilities for ESCAP, be assigned regional responsibilities covering the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries, including Indonesia, Myanmar and the Philippines, which currently host information centres.

61. As indicated in section III.B, a regional information centre will be established in Canberra (replacing the information centre in Sydney), to serve Australia and the Pacific States.

C. Latin American and Caribbean States

62. There are a total of 10 centres located in the Latin American and Caribbean States, namely, in the following cities: Asunción, Bogotá, Buenos Aires, La Paz, Lima, Managua (inoperational), Mexico City, Panama City, Port of Spain and Rio de Janeiro. In addition, ECLAC in Santiago has its own information unit, but no staff from the Department. Four of the information centres (Asunción, La Paz, Lima and Panama City) are headed by resident coordinators. The remaining five (Bogotá, Buenos Aires, Mexico City, Port of Spain and Rio de Janeiro) have Directors from the Department.

63. Bearing in mind the linguistic characteristics of the region, the Department proposes to establish three hubs in Latin America and the Caribbean. In Mexico City, the regional information centre would be headed by a Director at the D-1 level, and would cover Mexico and Spanish-speaking Central American and Caribbean countries, as well as provide strategic communications guidance to the entire Latin American and Caribbean region. Another hub would be created in Port of Spain, with responsibility for the English-speaking Caribbean countries. The third hub would be located in either Santiago or Buenos Aires, covering Spanish-speaking South American countries. National information staff would be posted in all the countries that previously hosted an information centre, and also in Jamaica.

64. A special arrangement would be established to address the Portuguese language needs of Brazil and link the lusophone countries on three continents.

D. African States

65. There are a total of 18 information centres in the African States (not including the information centres in the African States that are members of the League of Arab States, the information service in Addis Ababa and the United Nations Office in Asmara), namely, in the following cities: Accra, Antananarivo, Brazzaville, Bujumbura, Dakar, Dar es Salaam, Harare, Kinshasa, Lagos, Lomé, Lusaka, Maseru, Monrovia, Nairobi, Ouagadougou, Pretoria, Windhoek and Yaoundé. Twelve are headed by resident coordinators and one is headed by a UNEP staff member. Five of the information centres are headed by staff from the Department: Accra, Dakar, Harare, Lagos and Pretoria. An additional staff member from the Department is posted in Nairobi and another is stationed in Dar es Salaam.

66. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) of the African Union places a very strong emphasis on regional integration and regional approaches to development within Africa. NEPAD also emphasizes the need for African countries to strengthen the five subregional economic groupings, Southern Africa, Central Africa, East Africa, West Africa and North Africa.

67. To align its proposed network of regional information centres in Africa with the NEPAD approach, the Department proposes to establish a central hub in Addis Ababa, which would work in close cooperation with ECA to address the information needs of the continent as a whole, and six other regional hubs: in Pretoria for Southern Africa, in Yaoundé for Central Africa, in Nairobi for East Africa, in Dakar and Abuja for West Africa (covering French-speaking countries and English-speaking countries, respectively) and in Cairo for North Africa. The Department would also consider the establishment of an eighth regional hub in Luanda to cover the Portuguese-speaking African countries, on the basis of an offer made in November 2003 by the Government of Angola, pending examination of the resource implications of the proposal.

IX. Conclusion

68. As outlined in the present report, the Department considers that the implementation of its regionalization initiative will allow it to strengthen the flow and exchange of information on the United Nations in developing countries, within the resources allocated by the General Assembly to the United Nations information field presence, provided that the model is adapted to the realities of the developing world. It proposes to implement a flexible regionalization process that gives due attention to the characteristics of each individual region and country.

69. At the outset of the next phase, namely the extension of the regional hub initiative to developing countries, the Secretary-General looks forward to receiving the views of the Committee on Information, which will, in turn, be fully taken into account as the Department continues the implementation process, in consultation with Member States, with the aim of meeting the deadline fixed by the Secretary-General of completing the regionalization process over a three-year period that began in 2003.

Annex I

United Nations information centres and United Nations houses

1. The Department of Public Information continues to support the United Nations house concept and many United Nations information centres have been situated in such common premises, particularly in locations where there had been no provision of rent-free premises. As of January 2004, there were 58 United Nations houses in capitals worldwide. Of these, 25 were in locations that also host information centres. Where information centres exist in countries that host United Nations houses, they are co-located in all but seven instances. In a number of other locations, information centres share premises and some common services with other United Nations system partners.
2. The Department supports the United Nations house concept and has derived some benefits from it, notably the advancement of a common United Nations image and identity.
3. However, the Department has noted that the arrangements have, in most instances, led to increases in the operating costs of the relevant information centres, both in terms of rent and of common support charges, further reducing the limited resources available for local programme outreach activities.
4. In addition, since 1 August 2003, UNDP has instituted a formal cost recovery arrangement that charges the non-self-accounting information centres for the administrative and financial services performed on their behalf, according to a universal price list, which has significantly increased the operational costs of those information centres.
5. Locating information centres in United Nations houses presents an additional concern since such arrangements have often had a negative impact with regard to public accessibility since, among other factors, the premises are frequently located away from the city centres.
6. In recent months, heightened security awareness and the resulting decisions by the Office of the Security Coordinator have required some information centres to be moved from rent-free, or affordable premises, to United Nations houses, again at considerable cost.
7. The Department will continue to look into the ways and means of securing rent-free premises or subsidies from the host Governments, for both regional and other information centres, with a view to dedicating a greater portion of the limited resources at its disposal to outreach activities in the field.
8. Should the Department's regionalization proposal be approved, a number of information centres would be closed and individual staff assigned to the offices of the resident coordinators, which would be located within United Nations houses.

Annex II

Guidelines and criteria for the regionalization of United Nations information centres

- The human and financial resources allocated to a regional hub must be significantly more than the best-equipped United Nations information centre under current circumstances. It should have the capacity to produce and disseminate information materials and the professional capability to maintain productive contacts with media in the region, as well as academic institutions and non-governmental organizations.
- In a region with a common language, the hub shall be a centre for producing or adapting materials in that language, for use both in the region covered by the hub as well as in other parts of the world. Where there is more than one language, the hub should have the resources to undertake needed translations.
- A regional hub should have the necessary facilities to serve as a fully resourced reference centre for United Nations information.
- The host country would ideally have well developed transportation and aerial links with the rest of the region, a relatively well developed media landscape and modern communications systems, including connectivity, and active civil society institutions.
- The existence of other United Nations offices, including in particular a United Nations house, as well as regional organizations, may also be factors in deciding on the optimum location of a hub.
- The willingness of the host country Government to provide political and financial support, including the provision of rent-free premises, would be an important factor.
- To extend its reach, the regional information hub will collaborate closely with the country offices of United Nations resident coordinators, where they exist, and can engage in partnerships with national institutions and organizations including United Nations Associations.
- Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 57/300, the Department of Public Information will consult with concerned Member States on the rationalization of the network of United Nations information centres around regional hubs.

Annex III

Fulfilling the information mandate in developing countries: division of responsibilities between the regional information centres and national information staff

1. To enhance the flow of information on the United Nations to developing countries, the Department of Public Information proposes that its field information presence take three forms: (1) regional United Nations information centres, and (2) United Nations national information staff working out of the offices of the resident coordinators, or (3) the continuation of national information centres in some special circumstances.

1. Role of the regional information centres

2. A regional information centre would normally be based on a currently existing and well performing information centre located in a city that meets the requirements for hosting a hub. The main task of the regional information centre would be to ensure that the priorities of the United Nations are communicated to key audiences through the establishment of durable long-term strategic partnerships. Emphasis would be placed on using intermediaries rather than direct public outreach.

3. The programmatic activities of the regional information centres would focus on three areas:

(a) The dissemination of information on the work of the United Nations in particular on issues of priority concern, as identified by Headquarters;

(b) The promotion of issues of common concern to countries in the region, in particular development-related issues, as well as the work of the United Nations system in the region;

(c) The demonstration of how the United Nations country team makes a difference in people's daily lives, thereby clearly showing the value of the work of the United Nations system in the field.

4. The regional information centres would focus their resources on three main types of activities as set out below.

A. Media outreach

5. The most efficient and cost-effective way of reaching large sectors of society is to have local and regional media carry the United Nations message. Media outreach activities could include the following:

(a) Focusing on news organizations of the region;

(b) Adapting strategic communications plans, developed by Headquarters, to meet regional requirements;

(c) Compiling material and statistics of regional interest to support the placement of op-eds, press releases and the launching of reports;

(d) Disseminating information material to key media in the region by electronic means and maintaining a web site (while the degree of connectivity is not widespread in developing countries, most journalists have access to the Internet);

- (e) Giving telephone interviews to media in the region;
 - (f) Organizing press conferences and briefings on the Organization's priority issues and on issues of particular interest to the region;
 - (g) In cooperation with Headquarters, providing national information staff with media guidance;
 - (h) Conducting media monitoring, and providing press reviews and clippings to Headquarters.
6. The new concept would also aim to enhance the capacity of the hubs to provide news and related materials on United Nations activities in their regions, ensuring distribution to global audiences through other Department channels, such as the United Nations News Centre web site, and the audio and video programming produced by United Nations TV and Radio.
7. The regional information centres would also provide feedback to the Department on the use of television and radio feature material produced at Headquarters.

B. Educational outreach

8. While it is difficult and time-consuming to reach educators and students, once the groundwork has been done educational programmes can be very effective and bring long-term benefits. Educational outreach activities could include the following:
- (a) Selecting and adapting material for curricula development based on guidelines from Headquarters and input from UNESCO;
 - (b) Adapting teacher training packages to regional requirements;
 - (c) Developing components for model United Nations programmes and organizing regional model United Nations in cooperation with partners;
 - (d) Creating small-scale CyberSchoolBus packages;
 - (e) Conceptualizing and initiating regional letter-writing campaigns and essay competitions to be administered by the national information staff;
 - (f) Maintaining a comprehensive reference collection that serves educators and researchers from the region.
9. The centre's activities in this area would be supported by the Department's Educational Outreach Section at Headquarters, which is developing new partnerships in education with Governments, international agencies, educational institutions, non-governmental organizations and other representatives of civil society.

C. Civil society/non-governmental organization outreach

10. Building on the increase in the number of non-governmental organizations in the 1990s and taking advantage of their interest in United Nations issues, the regional information centres would work closely with civil society organizations. They would concentrate on groups that are well established and interested in

establishing long-term relationships. Interaction with civil society could include the following:

(a) Providing information and material to non-governmental organizations for further dissemination to their members;

(b) Undertaking joint activities, such as conferences, seminars and workshops to promote issues of common interest;

(c) Advising non-governmental organizations on how to carry out promotional campaigns on key issues;

(d) Identifying speakers and resource people for events organized by non-governmental organizations.

11. The regional information centres would continue to support and contribute to the work of the United Nations country teams, to provide services and information to local authorities, as required, and to produce basic United Nations information material in major local languages.

12. As only limited additional staff and operational resources are expected to be available to the regional information centres in the short term, they would have to narrow their focus, concentrate their efforts on high-impact activities and work with a few, but highly influential, partners. The shift in focus is also necessitated by the fact that they would have to devote effort to supporting the national information staff in their regions. The regional information centres could, for example, develop an annual work plan consisting of elements that could be used fully, or in part, by the national information staff. They could train local partners, such as United Nations Associations, depository libraries and educational institutions, so that these partners could provide service functions. It is expected that the regional information centres will devote less time to ceremonies, concerts, exhibits, book fairs, film and video screenings, newsletters, public inquiries and to services of an administrative nature to Headquarters. They would concentrate on activities for which major partners can be identified.

2. Role of national information staff

13. One or more experienced and well trained national information staff would be placed in the offices of resident coordinators in locations where an information centre has been closed. They would work closely with the regional information centre to which they report. These national information staff would concentrate their efforts on media outreach, on cooperation with the United Nations country team of which they would be integral members and, to the extent possible, on education outreach. They would also be responsible for empowering the resident coordinator to be an even more effective spokesperson for the United Nations system. Should the country team jointly retain the former information centre's library and resource centre, the national information officers would contribute by ensuring that the collection served the local community. Information about national information staff, and the activities they undertake would be posted on the country team web site.

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Modernization and integrated management of United Nations libraries and in-depth review of library activities**Report of the Secretary-General***Summary*

The present report is submitted in response to the request of the General Assembly in its resolution 56/253 of 24 December 2001 that the Secretary-General conduct a review of library services covering the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, the libraries of the United Nations Offices at Geneva and at Vienna, libraries in the regional commissions, departmental libraries, libraries at information centres and depository libraries with a view to defining the purpose of United Nations library services and identifying primary clients or users and the relationships and roles of the libraries, including the best way to achieve their mandates. It further requested him to implement as soon as possible new and more efficient ways of providing library services.

The report provides background information on the mission of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and other United Nations libraries as well as on library services for permanent missions and Secretariat departments, the depository library system, reference services of United Nations information centres and the relationships among the various United Nations libraries.

A major focus of the report is the coordinating role of the Steering Committee for the Modernization and Integrated Management of United Nations Libraries, chaired by the Director, Outreach Division, Department of Public Information, in implementing new and more efficient library services. Updated information is provided on achievements of the Steering Committee in all major areas of library activity, including an initial research gateway web page in the six official languages; a common list of serial holdings; a manual for bibliographic description posted on the Intranet; and the identification of additional online services to be acquired through the United Nations System Electronic Information Acquisition Consortium.

The report concludes by recommending that United Nations libraries (and those of agencies of the United Nations system), working in concert, bring their specialized expertise in information management to bear in the development of the knowledge-sharing initiatives of the system.



I. Introduction

1. In paragraphs 34 and 35 of its resolution 56/253 of 24 December 2001, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to conduct a review of library services covering the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, the libraries of the United Nations Offices at Geneva and at Vienna, libraries in the regional commissions, departmental libraries, libraries at information centres and depository libraries with a view to defining the purpose of United Nations library services and identifying primary clients or users and the relationships and roles of the libraries, including the best way to achieve their mandates through the relevant intergovernmental bodies, and to report thereon to the Assembly at its fifty-seventh session. The Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to implement as soon as possible new and more efficient ways of providing library services.

2. The present report is submitted pursuant to the above requests, as well as the requests contained in paragraph 14 of General Assembly resolution 57/300 of 20 December 2002 and paragraph 82 of its resolution 58/101 B of 9 December 2003. It incorporates the results of questionnaires sent in May 2002 to United Nations libraries at all major duty stations, departmental reference collections at Headquarters, other departmental staff at Headquarters, United Nations information centres and depository libraries receiving United Nations documents (there was an 84 per cent response rate to the questionnaire). In addition, interviews were conducted with over 40 individuals, librarians, users and other officials. The report also covers the establishment of the Steering Committee for the Modernization and Integrated Management of United Nations Libraries (in implementation of para. 35 of resolution 56/253), as well as its achievements to date.

II. Background

3. In accordance with the original mandate for library services (contained in document A/C.5/298 of 28 September 1949, entitled "Library policy and organization"), the Library's primary function is to enable the delegations, Secretariat and other official groups of the Organization to obtain, with the greatest possible speed, convenience and economy, the library materials and information needed in the execution of their duties. Nevertheless, the Library also had a mandate to go beyond those groups, to give service, as far as feasible, to the specialized agencies, accredited representatives of the media, international government organizations, affiliated non-governmental organizations, educational institutions, scholars and writers. Furthermore, through a depository libraries programme and the publication of printed indexes, the Library was mandated to reach out to the general public worldwide.

4. With the opportunities arising from the information revolution, as well as the new perspectives stemming from the incorporation of the Headquarters library, now called the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, into the Department of Public Information in 1993, this external outreach has taken on increased importance. Today, the Library is moving in the direction of a virtual library, while not neglecting the printed materials required by its users. It serves a primary clientele consisting of missions and Secretariat staff, but is reaching out increasingly to civil society, particularly through its web sites and its services to depository libraries. It is also striving to

become more multilingual in its outputs, within the limits of its resources. Its new mission statement is therefore:

To create and/or provide timely and up-to-date information products and services, to meet the needs of delegates, Secretariat staff and researchers; to facilitate access to United Nations information for depository libraries and the general public worldwide; to contribute to "bridging the digital divide"; to mobilize the international library community, in particular depository libraries, as conduits of outreach to civil society; and to oversee and coordinate the activities of United Nations libraries.

5. Other United Nations libraries have also been moving in the direction of increased electronic access as well as public outreach, within their capacity. The library at the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) has a specific mandate to provide services to local educational institutions, while the library at the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) plays a leading role in disseminating information in its region.

6. The United Nations Office at Geneva Library offers state-of-the-art facilities, including research areas equipped with 44 computer workstations, and has launched a programme of library information sessions in a dedicated training room. The Library has converted its manual card catalogue to electronic format, thereby providing electronic access to Library collections dating back to 1919. The Geneva Library offers its Integrated Library Management System as the backbone infrastructure for libraries of the United Nations and the United Nations system in Geneva and elsewhere in Europe, with the libraries of the following organizations being part of its network of satellite libraries: the United Nations Office at Geneva Terminology Section, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the International Organization for Migration, the International Telecommunication Union, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and the United Nations Office at Vienna. To preserve and provide increased access to the institutional memory of the Organization, the Geneva Library is in the process of acquiring equipment that will enable it to digitize documents and preserve them on microfiche in one operation. In addition to providing a large constituency of scholars and representatives of civil society with access to a wealth of information resources, the Library has become the coordinator of an active programme of cultural activities at the Geneva office, developed in the context of the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations. In 2002, 18,350 people attended cultural events at the Palais des Nations, including exhibitions, concerts, talks and performances of dance, theatre and film, all conducted under the auspices of the Geneva Library.

III. Library services for permanent missions and Secretariat departments

7. Library services specifically for permanent missions and Secretariat departments include: the purchase of books and serials; reference and research services; access to online services, most acquired through the United Nations System Electronic Information Acquisition Consortium led by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library; electronic dissemination of information via e-mail; training

in online searching of United Nations and non-United Nations Internet sites; assistance in organizing departmental collections; assistance in creating databases; digitization of documents; provision of a subject thesaurus in the six official languages; and needs assessment in relation to all of the above. In addition, library services available to the public, most of which serve the primary clientele as well, include: UNBISNET (bibliographic database on the web at <http://unbisnet.un.org>); printed indexes to United Nations documentation; the Library's web site (<http://www.un.org/Depts/dhl>), including reference tools for access to United Nations documents; regional training programmes in United Nations documentation and in accessing United Nations web sites for depository libraries; global e-mail messages to depository libraries; a technical cooperation programme for small and field libraries; reference services for visiting scholars; and inter-library loan services to other libraries.

8. Furthermore, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library has been contributing to the promotion of multilingualism and to the development of the Official Document System (ODS), in accordance with numerous requests by the General Assembly, most recently in its resolution 56/253. The Library is making ongoing efforts to develop its web pages in the six official languages, to the extent possible within existing resources. While its budget for books and serials is limited, it has been attempting to diversify its acquisitions in the official languages. Furthermore, the Library has ensured its staffing capacity in those languages.

9. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library bibliographic records have been the source of the limited metadata attached to documents on ODS since the inception of that system. Furthermore, once it became technically possible to do so, the Library began to create direct linkages between the complete records in the Library's United Nations Bibliographic Information System (UNBIS) and the full texts of documents stored on ODS. All records for documents of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council and their subsidiary bodies are now linked to the text of those documents in all languages of issuance. Furthermore, through the UNBIS thesaurus file, searching of ODS by established descriptors in the six official languages has been made possible. Finally, through the efforts of the Library, ODS access was secured for depository libraries as an option in place of printed copies of parliamentary documents.

10. One particular service that the Dag Hammarskjöld Library provides to Secretariat departments is the backstopping of departmental reference collections. These are specialized collections of documents, monographs, serials and, in some cases, audio-visual materials, of direct relevance mainly to the department concerned. In accordance with Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/152 of 4 March 1976, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library provides advice and support to those reference centres. The staff of the specialized collections, in turn, often serve as the focal points for departmental requests for Library materials and for the routing of serials to departmental staff. The results of the survey referred to in paragraph 2 indicated that the staff members in charge of those collections would like more regular contact with the Dag Hammarskjöld Library. Therefore, more general meetings and individual follow-up by the collection librarian are planned. The reference centres are potentially effective marketers of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library's services within their departments.

11. The survey results also indicated the following areas in which services to departments (as well as to permanent missions and other clients) could be improved or enhanced:

- Regular electronic alerts of new information sources, services and acquisitions
- Increase in the purchase of monographs (and some serials) on subjects related to substantive work
- Increase in specialized online services
- Selective dissemination of information from online databases (in addition to information from electronic journals that is currently provided)
- Continued and increased technical cooperation with departments in cataloguing, digitization, etc.

IV. Depository libraries system

12. As mandated in document A/C.5/298 and in order to make United Nations documents and publications available throughout the world, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library oversees a worldwide network of depository libraries. As at 30 June 2002, there were 408 such institutions in 144 countries. As stipulated in the principles governing United Nations depository libraries (ST/AI/189/Add.11/Rev.2 of 18 August 1995), the libraries are expected to maintain the material in good order and to make it accessible to the public, free of charge, at reasonable hours. The traditional role of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library in relation to those libraries was mainly administrative: to process applications for depository status, to ensure, through questionnaires and visits, that depository libraries fulfilled their mandated obligations and to assist with claims for missing documents. It also provided guidance through correspondence, received and trained visiting librarians at Headquarters and issued successive editions of the manual entitled "UN Documentation" (which has been expanded and published on the Internet with the title "United Nations Documentation: Research Guide"). In recent years, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library has also come to see depository libraries as an important link to civil society, providing the opportunity for outreach to ordinary people in Member States as well as a vehicle for bridging the digital divide. Additional activities include some funding of local travel to encourage depository library visits by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and other staff already in a given country on other official or personal business; creation of a depository libraries web page; the regular dispatch of e-mail messages to depository libraries, alerting them to the latest United Nations issues, campaigns and observances; encouraging depository libraries to publicize their collections and to conduct symposiums, exhibits, and the like on United Nations themes; training programmes; and advocacy.

13. With regard to the latter, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library has initiated a worldwide training programme for depository libraries in developing countries and countries with economies in transition. Since 1997, regional workshops have been held in collaboration with regional commission libraries or United Nations information centres, and in the appropriate official language, in Bangkok, Beirut, Bucharest, Islamabad, Mexico City, Moscow, New Delhi, Port of Spain, Pretoria, Rabat and Santiago. Depository librarians have been trained in accessing United Nations information, with an emphasis on electronic information sources. Basic

Internet training has also been provided for librarians who have had little or no previous access to the web. Unfortunately, funding for bringing depository librarians to the training site decreased in the biennium 2004-2005, which limits the number of workshops that can be offered to one per year.

14. In terms of advocacy, through the active intervention of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, depository libraries have been granted free or concessional access to a number of United Nations databases, such as the treaty database. Most importantly, depository libraries with free or full deposit were granted the option to receive their entitlements in the form of ODS access rather than in printed form. It must be noted, however, that of 340 such libraries worldwide, only 123 have elected that option thus far. Since the Organization is moving in the direction of electronic distribution of parliamentary documents, the Library has directed its 2004 biennial questionnaire to ascertaining the capacity of depository libraries to receive documentation electronically.

V. Relationship among the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, the United Nations information centres and the depository libraries

15. The reference services at United Nations information centres provide direct information support to information centre staff as well as access to United Nations documentation and information products for the public at their respective locations. The primary clientele are university students and researchers, representatives of the media and non-governmental organizations and government officials. A three-way relationship exists between the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, the United Nations information centres and depository libraries. The Library offers technical backstopping to information centres through its small and field libraries programme. The information centres, for their part, have traditionally been the strongest partners of the Library in assisting and monitoring the depository libraries in their areas. Depository libraries with extensive retrospective collections have served as back-up facilities for clientele of the information centres with limited collections. The information centres have also collaborated with the Library in organizing and serving as the venue for depository library workshops (hosting 7 of the 11 held thus far). In turn, United Nations information centre staff at the office concerned as well as at other centres in the region have attended those workshops. Finally, the information centres have been strongly encouraged to include depository libraries in their thematic campaigns as extensions of their outreach to the general public.

16. The above activities need to be continued and strengthened. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library has been placing increasing emphasis, in cooperation with the Information Centres Service of the Strategic Communications Division, on making the information centres aware of the services it provides, particularly the small and field libraries programme. While a number of information centres have active ongoing relationships with depository libraries in their home cities, the practice needs to be institutionalized worldwide. The joint organization of exhibits, symposiums and so on would enlarge the target audiences for such events. Mutual training opportunities could also be exploited, as information centre reference assistants may have more day-to-day practical knowledge of United Nations documentation and campaigns, while depository library staff are more likely to be

trained librarians with extensive professional knowledge. Mutual access to online databases must be encouraged. Finally, within the framework of closer cooperation between the information centres and depository libraries, the feasibility of transferring large United Nations collections from information centre libraries to nearby depository libraries will be examined and pursued. In other cases, information centres located at United Nations houses and other common premises will seek to establish a unified United Nations reference service for their area.

17. In the context of the regionalization of the network of information centres in Western Europe, the collections of the nine information centres that were closed on 31 December 2003 have been transferred to other United Nations and non-United Nations entities. The collections of two information centres, in Athens and Rome, will remain in place, administered and maintained by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) respectively. The bulk of the collections of three other information centres of the region, in Brussels, Madrid and Paris, have been transferred to the new regional United Nations information centre in Brussels, thus enabling the centre to maintain a collection of United Nations documents and publications in the three official languages spoken in the region. The Copenhagen and London collections have been transferred in full to depository libraries in Roskilde, Denmark, and Leuven, Belgium, respectively. Finally, the Bonn and Lisbon collections have each been divided and transferred to several institutions in those cities, including other United Nations offices, depository libraries and educational institutions. The Bonn information centre's collection of United Nations documents in German was transferred to the centre in Brussels. As part of the further regionalization of the network of United Nations information centres in developing countries, the Department of Public Information will explore ways to strengthen the library and resource centres in the proposed regional information centres, while retaining those resources at the offices of the resident coordinators in the other capitals. To this end, the Department will explore with the United Nations Development Group the possibility of a cost-sharing mechanism that would enable it to maintain its reference services in developing countries, where vast segments of the population are not benefiting from the present information and technological revolution.

18. Despite the achievements of individual libraries, the survey revealed that United Nations libraries have been operating independently, with limited coordination or common direction. Costly modernization efforts have been undertaken by each library acting alone. Given the advantages that the Internet and other communication technologies provide, opportunities now exist to create greater synergy and greater integration among United Nations libraries to render more effective service to their diverse clients. Closer coordination is required among the libraries in order that they might share knowledge more effectively among themselves, promote knowledge sharing within the Secretariat at large, provide better library services to delegates and staff, enhance multilingualism, achieve greater outreach to the general public and contribute to bridging the digital divide in Member States. Various initiatives are also under way at the inter-agency level that deserve support. Better coordination at all levels will lead to some savings as well; however, a significant investment will be required to enhance online services as well as to create a more electronic environment.

19. The responses to the questionnaires referred to in paragraph 2 also validate the Secretary-General's intention, made clear in his report on strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change (A/57/387 and Corr.1), to call for strong leadership of United Nations libraries by the Department of Public Information, through the Outreach Division and the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, in order to ensure: the implementation of library standards; the development of professional tools; the development of electronic products and services, particularly web portals; staff training and development; and the oversight of shared activities (indexing, digitization, extended reference, etc.). Recent areas of collaboration among United Nations libraries are outlined below.

A. United Nations Office at Geneva and Dag Hammarskjöld Library

20. The mandate contained in the General Assembly document setting out library policy and organization (A/C.5/298) envisioned a close collaboration between the Headquarters and Geneva libraries. Over the years, however, two separate libraries developed that occasionally engaged in cooperative efforts. The relationship that developed between the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and what is now called the United Nations Office at Geneva Library could be described as one of collaboration between two separate entities in certain specific areas, with the Dag Hammarskjöld Library serving as the lead agency:

(a) The United Nations Office at Geneva Library has been responsible for indexing specific series of United Nations documents issued in Geneva and entering the records directly into the database managed by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, which is then made available to the public via UNBISNET (<http://unbisnet.un.org>). Librarians in Geneva propose new subject descriptors and proper name authority entries, for which the Dag Hammarskjöld Library specialists are ultimately responsible. Indexing policy directives are issued by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, after consultation with United Nations Office at Geneva staff;

(b) The Geneva Library is a member of the United Nations System Electronic Information Acquisition Consortium, managed by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, for joint access to commercial online services;

(c) While each library purchases the printed materials required by its local clients, the two libraries maintain an active inter-library loan relationship;

(d) Geneva-based librarians participate in the programme of visits to depository libraries.

B. United Nations Office at Vienna

21. Library services at the Vienna International Centre were provided from 1979 onwards by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) as an inter-agency common service. During the 2001-2002 period, however, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization withdrew to establish their own libraries, at which point IAEA informed the United Nations Office at Vienna that it could no longer continue to provide common library services. As a result, since 1 April 2002, there has been no central library serving the United Nations agencies in general, or the United Nations

Office at Vienna in particular. Library and information services are decentralized to 17 library focal points, with book and serial purchases handled by the United Nations Office at Vienna Commercial Operations Unit. Monitoring of expenditures, reference services for United Nations documents and access to online services (acquired mainly through the Consortium) are provided by the Linguistic Support Unit, Conference Services.

22. In view of the ad hoc nature of library services at the United Nations Office at Vienna, a special review of the collections and information delivery logistics at that duty station was conducted in December 2002, with the assistance of a librarian from the Dag Hammarskjöld Library. A number of recommendations resulting from the review have already been put into effect, notably those concerning the purchase of library materials and access to online services, the acquisition of an integrated library management system, the inter-operability of systems, training programmes for users of online services, digitization of major historical documents, creation of a centralized catalogue for United Nations Office at Vienna resources (housed on the United Nations Office at Geneva Library server) and an e-library portal on the Vienna Intranet site.

C. Other United Nations libraries

23. As far as the smaller United Nations libraries are concerned, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library conducts training and mentoring programmes. Librarians from the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), ESCAP, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations University (UNU) have attended two-week training courses at Headquarters and have been provided with electronic copies of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library database structure. Furthermore, in 2000 the Dag Hammarskjöld Library initiated its small and field libraries programme. Among the goals of this programme are to enable librarians in United Nations small and field libraries to deliver high-quality service to their users and to encourage the exchange of professional ideas, training, standards and recommended best practices. As a first step, a database structure in English, French and Spanish was designed by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library using Winisis, software developed and distributed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization that is widely used in Latin America, Africa and Asia. A package including the database structure, the software and various manuals was sent to a number of institutions, including libraries in the field, United Nations information centres and some depository libraries. The second step was the launch of a dedicated web site at the end of November 2000. The site, which is updated regularly, is intended to serve as a centralized gateway to documentation and other pertinent electronic resources available on the Internet. Third, librarians can receive direct technical support from the Dag Hammarskjöld Library staff via e-mail or participate in an online forum, which is part of the web site.

24. It should also be noted that regional commissions and various field offices participate in the Consortium, managed by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, which has enabled access to commercial online services to be purchased at volume-driven concessional prices.

25. Another form of collaboration involves the training of depository librarians. Several regional commissions (ESCAP, ESCWA and ECLAC) have served as venues for regional workshops to which the Commission librarians have contributed and from which they have benefited.

26. Nevertheless, as stated above, the survey made clear that cooperation between Headquarters and the field as well as among the libraries at the various duty stations could be improved. Areas of further collaboration could include:

- The participation of regional commission libraries that are capable of doing so in indexing and digitization activities
- Recommendations by libraries away from Headquarters concerning local intellectual output that could be acquired at Headquarters or other duty stations
- Mutual reliance with respect to information services
- Collaborative development of multilingual web sites
- Collaborative development of professional tools and training programmes, particularly materials that could be shared with local libraries in developing countries
- Development of an extended-hours reference service, encompassing duty stations worldwide.

VI. Steering Committee for the Modernization and Integrated Management of United Nations Libraries

27. To achieve greater collaboration among the Organization's libraries, facilitate their continuing modernization and implement new and more efficient ways of providing library services, the relationships among the libraries needed to be more clearly defined and a structural mechanism put in place. On the initiative of the Deputy Secretary-General and in the spirit of the report of the Secretary-General on strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change (A/57/387 and Corr.1, paras. 73-75 and action 9), a Steering Committee on the Modernization and Integrated Management of United Nations Libraries was formed in January 2003. Chaired by the Director, Outreach Division, Department of Public Information, and including representatives of libraries from all major duty stations, the Steering Committee has held four meetings (three by videoconference) and has embarked on an ambitious work programme (see A/AC.198/2003/5). Achievements to date are noted below.

A. Archival collections

28. Since New York and Geneva both service key intergovernmental meetings, it was agreed that both the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and the United Nations Office at Geneva Library would maintain archival collections of United Nations documents and publications to the extent feasible. However, they would not attempt to be exhaustive in the collection of materials from lower-level subsidiary bodies of the regional commissions; this task would primarily be the responsibility of the libraries at the respective duty stations. To that extent, the collections would be in the nature

of a distributed archive. To assist other libraries in filling gaps in their collections, the smaller duty stations (specifically, the United Nations Office at Vienna, ECA, ECLAC, ESCAP, ESCWA, UNU and, to some extent, the United Nations Office at Nairobi) prepared inventories of their collections.

29. However, given that ODS will soon be opened up to the public at large, it was decided that before tackling paper-based collections, priority had to be given to filling gaps in ODS from its inception in 1993 to the present. This has become a joint endeavour of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and the United Nations Office at Geneva Library, in close collaboration with the Information Technology Services Division of the Department of Management and the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library has devised computer programs to identify gaps and errors in both ODS and its own related bibliographic records, and has been granted access to correct certain errors in the ODS metadata. Missing documents will be digitized from microfiche or printed documents in the Dag Hammarskjöld Library's collections. In some cases, it is expected that missing documents in the various languages will be supplied by the text-processing units of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management from their back-up disks.

30. The United Nations Office at Geneva Library, as part of a preservation-related project, has downloaded several thousand documents in Arabic and Chinese from ODS that had been digitized by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and has produced sets of microfiche for both libraries.

B. Bibliographic control of United Nations documents

31. In order to ensure common standards for indexing and cataloguing and thus facilitate the integration of records from other United Nations libraries into the United Nations Bibliographic Information System, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, in close collaboration with the United Nations Office at Geneva Library, has posted a reference manual for bibliographic description to the Intranet. The manual covers all data elements for indexing and cataloguing both United Nations and non-United Nations materials. Work is currently in progress on data elements for special files (voting records, speeches, etc.). The Dag Hammarskjöld Library has also been meeting with representatives of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management to standardize document symbols in the various electronic systems (the electronic Documents Registration, Information and Tracking System, or e-DRITS, ODS and UNBIS), as well as to devise measures to provide titles in the six official languages in those databases.

C. Collaborative reference services

32. Several reference initiatives were undertaken, including the posting of an initial research gateway page, in the six official languages on the web; an after-hours telephone reference service between the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and the United Nations Office at Geneva Library; a set of guidelines for a proposed "Ask a Librarian" joint online query service; and an Intranet page, entitled "United Nations libraries: core areas of specialization and contact information".

D. Collection development

33. A number of projects were undertaken in this area. A common list of serial holdings was produced, covering almost all United Nations libraries, to assist member libraries in developing their collections and in sharing resources. Since it proved useful to member libraries for both acquisition decisions and inter-library loans, a second version is planned for early 2004. To encourage the development of common standards, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library updated its collection development guidelines and distributed them to its partner libraries. Other member libraries are expected to do likewise. In addition, a number of online services were identified that had been acquired separately by several member libraries. They were added to the list of products to be acquired through the United Nations System Electronic Information Acquisition Consortium, managed by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library.

34. Several members of the Steering Committee expressed concern about the difficulties and costs associated with obtaining publications or accessing databases of other agencies of the United Nations system. This issue was, therefore, raised by Steering Committee members attending the meeting of the inter-agency Knowledge Sharing and Information Management Network, held in Geneva in September 2003. The result was a recommendation to the High Level Committee on Management of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, which was favourably received by that body. The Chairman of the Steering Committee then sent a letter to the heads of the specialized agencies, funds and programmes transmitting the text of the High Level Committee on Management, in which it noted the work of the Knowledge Sharing and Information Management Group and supported the recommendation that organizations make available their publications and databases to United Nations system members on a reciprocal basis, and urged them to take the steps necessary to make the published information of each agency available without charge to all other agencies of the United Nations system.

E. Common web sites

35. As noted above, a number of joint outputs have already been posted to the Internet/Intranet. Meanwhile, common home pages for the United Nations libraries are being finalized, including a common logo (the United Nations logo accompanied by the words "United Nations Libraries" in the six official languages).

F. Small and field libraries

36. A preliminary survey of small and field libraries, including those in United Nations information centres, was conducted. Areas identified for improvement in the context of Steering Committee activities include collaborative reference services at the local level, resource sharing and training. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library, which has already posted reference tools on its small and field libraries web site, has agreed to take the lead in developing online training modules.

G. Management issues

37. In the autumn of 2003, a senior librarian of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library visited Nairobi on a consultancy mission, which resulted in a report on the feasibility and mechanisms for the establishment of a common library at the duty station, including UNEP, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and possibly other entities. The report was very well-received by those offices. Since then, the UNEP Library has undertaken to operate as a de facto United Nations library in Nairobi. The collections of UN-Habitat, UNIFEM, the United Nations information centre, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees have been integrated into the library, and the United Nations Office at Nairobi, UNDP and UN-Habitat have contributed to its renovation and/or staffing.

H. Future directions

38. The Steering Committee will continue to meet quarterly during 2004, mainly by videoconference, while the subcommittees will continue to communicate through e-mail and documentation posted on a common Intranet site. During the year, it is expected that the United Nations libraries' web sites will be fully operational, gaps in documents on ODS from 1993 to the present will be filled, online training modules for small and field libraries will be developed, a collaborative "Ask Your Librarian" site will be launched and the research manual for bibliographic description will be completed for all databases of the UNBIS. In addition, electronic databases offered through the Consortium will be augmented to include more services of interest to all United Nations libraries. To ensure that due emphasis is given to the role of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library in fostering these common ventures, one of its performance indicators adopted for the 2004-2005 budget is "the number of joint and/or coordinated projects by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and other United Nations libraries" (see General Assembly resolution 58/270, annex I, sect. 28, table 28.22).

39. In order to serve library users more effectively, however, the member libraries and the Steering Committee itself need to make certain efforts for which current funding is insufficient. These include a modest increase in print acquisitions; a substantial increase in access to commercial online services; the acquisition of software to permit the generation of automatic electronic alerts from a variety of databases; and holding regional training courses for depository librarians, videoconferences and annual meetings of the Steering Committee. The objective is to move further in the direction of a virtual library network, with resources that can be shared across duty stations, while not neglecting the print resources required by local users.

VII. Inter-agency level

40. The libraries of the United Nations system have been meeting regularly and managing joint projects since 1995, most recently as the Knowledge Sharing and Information Management Network. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library has long played

an active role in this forum and has led a number of its initiatives. Increased attendance at its meetings, including attendance by representatives of other libraries of the Organization, indicates a growing interest in joint activities as well as an acknowledgement of dependencies in working in an Internet-connected world. The efforts of the Network deserve strong support, as they are fully congruent with the growing Secretariat interest in knowledge sharing, including the Extranet, the United Nations system Internet portal and common search engine, communities of practice and digital archives. Two projects of the Knowledge Sharing and Information Management network call for particular attention at the present time. The United Nations System Electronic Information Acquisition Consortium, founded and managed by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, has grown from an initial 17 members to 54 members covering more than 70 offices worldwide, and now provides 41 electronic information products. The Consortium needs to be expanded to include a richer menu of products and services vital to the efficient work of the Organization and of other agencies of the common system. A memorandum of agreement has been put into effect to provide a firm administrative basis for this major endeavour.

41. Furthermore, the United Nations Libraries Shared Cataloguing and Public Access System, an inter-agency catalogue, is currently available on the web (<http://uncaps.unsystem.org>). However, it needs to be expanded and re-engineered on a more up-to-date platform, and a source of funding will have to be identified for that purpose. The World Intellectual Property Organization, the lead agency for this endeavour, is currently preparing a project plan.

VIII. Conclusions

42. The expertise of the library community of practice should be utilized to enhance information management within the Organization as a whole. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library is now chairing the Task Force on Sharing the Knowledge of the Secretariat Internally and Externally under the Secretariat-wide Information and Communications Technology Board. United Nations libraries must play a leading role in ensuring that all libraries of the Organization, together with those of its sister agencies, may bring their specialized expertise in information management to bear in development of the knowledge-sharing initiatives of the system.